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Fraktur In The South: An Itinerant Artist

JOHN BIVINS, JR.

The German art of illuminated manuscripts, given the generic name of *fraktur* by Henry Mercer in the late nineteenth century, is today considered a major American folk-art form. Mercer's term for these documents should be considered significant, since *fraktur* describes the Gothic hand developed by ecclesiastical scribes during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The interrupted or "fractured" appearance of the complex letters of the Gothic alphabet brought about the German word describing this hand. The primary importance of *fraktur* to the artists, as Frederick Weiser has pointed out in several scholarly papers in recent years, was, in fact, the message that each document contained. The illumination or decoration of the pieces was considered secondary by the executing artist, whether he was a sixteenth-century German monk transcribing Biblical passages or an eighteenth-century Pennsylvania schoolmaster drawing a *vorschrift*. Today, however, it is the naïve art of the documents which interests students most.

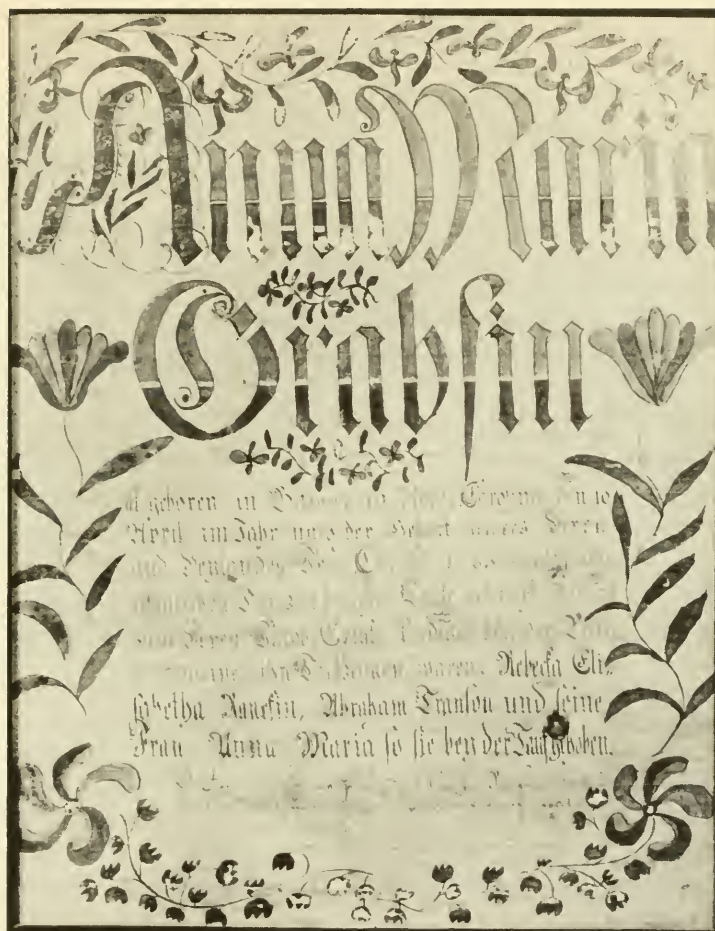
Fraktur art is considered by some to have experienced a great revival in southeastern Pennsylvania from the mid-eighteenth century to the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Whether or not the great profusion of *fraktur* produced in this country during that period indicates a revival, it is certain that the medieval art was brought to an identifiable American style and popularized among most of the German-American settlements in Pennsylvania. Although relatively little is known about the extent and design origins of

fraktur in central Europe, it seems apparent that fraktur was not necessarily a mannerist art form throughout the Germanic countries. Alsace and Switzerland have been identified as regions which produced art quite similar to that of this country, though significantly large geographic areas of Europe have yielded no great quantity of the art. That the closely-knit, Pennsylvania German settlements included fraktur artists from diverse areas of Europe appears to have brought about a new stimulus in design. It may well be that the popularization of fraktur in America introduced the art to recently-arrived German settlers who had not been familiar with it in Europe. Certainly the dense German population in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania invited the rapid growth of an American artistic vocabulary in the art. The importance of these essentially religious documents to German settlers seems obvious in the light of the central role of the church in German communities, while the more secular nature of fraktur ornamentation satisfied a basic need for bright and colorful design to punctuate the script.

A steady emigration of Pennsylvania Germans to the South from the 1730's until the nineteenth century virtually guaranteed the practice of fraktur art in Virginia and the Carolinas, although the Shenandoah Valley must be credited with the largest concentration of southern fraktur to date. Several important Virginia artists have long been identified, particularly in the area from Rockingham County north to Winchester. Other decorative arts, especially decorated furniture, have been associated with these artists in Virginia.

North Carolina, however, has not yielded as large a *per capita* sample of the art, in spite of the large German element in the central Piedmont. Other decorative art forms associated with German settlements and plentiful in southeastern Pennsylvania seem to be far from common in North Carolina, including such objects as decorated "dower" chests, slip-decorated earthenware, and even bank-barns. Some clue to the smaller survival of purely Germanic decorative art there may be found in the fact that the German community in North Carolina was not as cohesive as that in the Valley of Virginia; also, the region was dominated politically and socially by the Scots-Irish and English settlers.

Of the German settlements in North Carolina, Wachovia, the large tract taken up by the Moravians, provides the most



Photographs by Bradford L. Rauschenberg, the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts except where noted.

Figure 1. Taufschein of Anna Marie Grabs, born in Bethania, N. C. in 1783. Private collection.

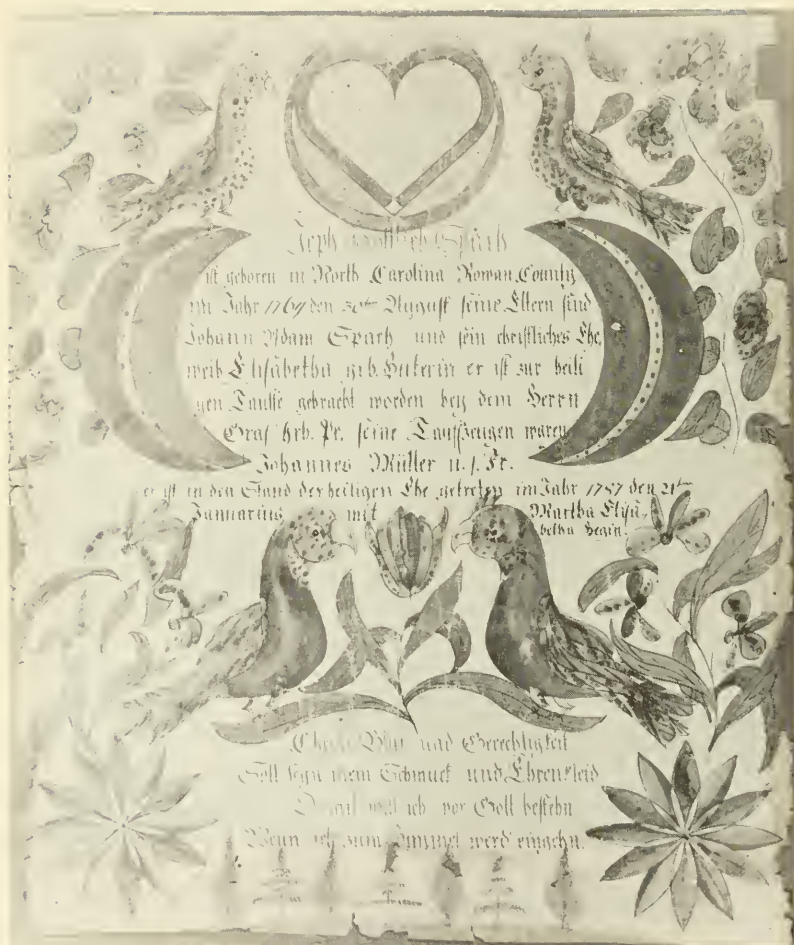


Figure 2. Taufschein of Gottlieb Spach, born near Friedberg, N. C. in 1764. Private collection.

readily examinable sample of transplanted Teutonic culture. This is due to relatively high population density, clear geographic and social definition, and the meticulous records kept by the Moravian communities. The Moravians, however, were not known for their production of Germanic folk art, either in Pennsylvania settlements or in North Carolina. While they were not an austere group by any means, emphasis in the Moravian communities was placed upon maintenance and perfection of the societal norm. Most of the Moravians were both well-traveled and well-educated by eighteenth-century American standards. Moravian decorative arts, possibly for these reasons, and also due to the urban origins of many of the Moravian settlers, tend to be somewhat more restrained and formal than most German-American art. The Moravian communities exhibit a notable lack of both decorated furniture and fraktur from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, though Moravian decorated earthenware ranks among the finest folk art in North America.

The one important fraktur artist identified with the North Carolina Moravian settlement may not have been a Moravian himself. Although his work has been identified since the 1950's, the artist remains anonymous. He (or she) was given the name "*Ehre Vater Artist*" by Donald Shelley with the publication of his *Fraktur-Writings* in 1961. The phrase was derived from the artist's unusual tendency to use bold "mast-head" mottos such as *Ehre Vater und Mutter* (Honor Father and Mother).

By 1972, Old Salem, Incorporated had acquired two fine specimens of this anonymous artist's work, both executed for North Carolina subjects. A brief search revealed three other pieces, also for local subjects. The writer mounted a small study exhibit of the *Ehre Vater* artist's work at MESDA during the same year, consisting of five *taufscheine* (birth and baptismal certificates) for North Carolina subjects and one *taufschein* for a Northampton County, Pennsylvania, subject. Since that time, examples or photographs of some twenty pieces of fraktur by this artist have been examined: seven for North Carolina Moravian subjects and thirteen for Pennsylvania subjects of Bucks, Northampton, Berks, Dauphin, and Lancaster Counties. Many more documents by this artist no doubt exist, since he was obviously prolific and widely traveled. Two other fraktur hands have been identified in

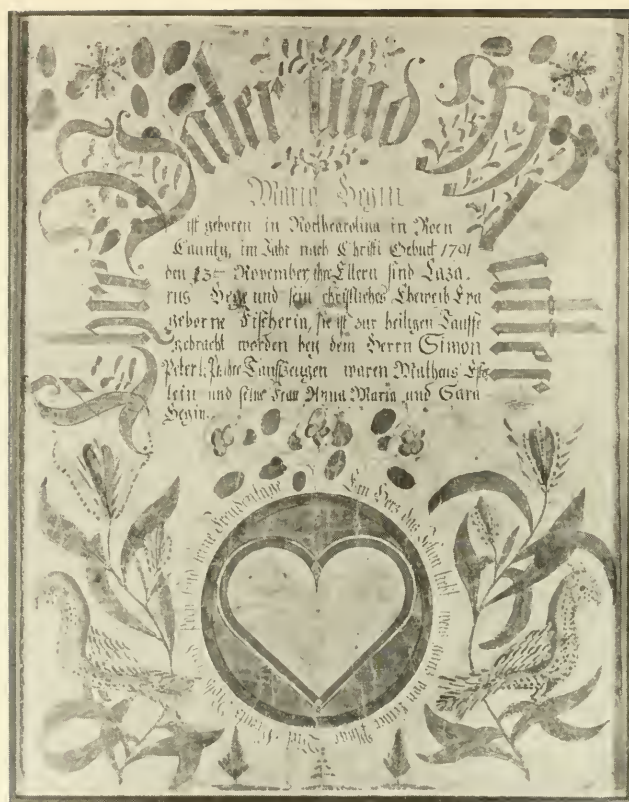


Figure 3. Taufschein of Maria Hege, born in Friedberg, N. C. in 1791. Old Salem, Inc.

North Carolina that are related artistically to the work of the *Ehre Vater* artist, and possibly one associated hand in Pennsylvania (Frederick S. Weiser, *Fraktur* [Ephrata: Science Press], the *taufschein* of Elisabeth Leibenguth, p. 98).

Every example of this artist's work examined by the writer has been in the form of a *taufschein*; no *vorschriften* (letter exercises) or other relatively common forms such as the *haus-segen* (house blessing) or "bookmarks" have been found that may be attributed to this hand, though examples may exist. Of the various forms of American fraktur, the birth-and baptismal certificate, certainly, is the most frequently found, despite the apparent practice in some areas of burying the documents with the deceased.

The *taufschein* was intended to record the birth of a child and its subsequent baptism, along with significant information such as locale, date, names of presiding ministers, sponsors, and occasionally even sects and churches. By the end of the eighteenth century, the language of the American *taufschein* was to a degree standardized, due, no doubt, to the widespread sale of printed *taufscheine*. Though the *Ehre Vater* artist did not strictly adhere to a standard wording for his documents, the content of the message generally follows that used and quoted here from the *taufschein* of Maria Hege (Fig. 3):

Honor Father and Mother
Maria Hege

Was born in North Carolina in Rowan County,
in the year after Christ's birth 1791 the 23rd of
November. Her parents are Lazarus Hege and his
Christian wife Eva, born Fischer. She was brought
to Holy Baptism by the Reverend Simon Peter.
Her sponsors were Matheus Esterlein and his wife
Anna Maria and Sara Hege.

The text was often followed by a religious verse serving as an admonition to the child to lead a righteous life. In this example we find the verse, "A heart that loves Jesus knows nothing of evil; bearing the cross, want and pain are its days of joy."

The *Ehre Vater* artist was clearly an itinerant, like many of his contemporaries, and it is also clear that he produced *taufscheine* as at least one means of income. Of the twenty documents studied, the texts of fourteen were entirely filled in by the artist's hand. Five others were completed by a second hand (as in Fig. 4), and one, the *taufschein* of Georg Huber (Fig. 10), indicates that the artist wrote most of the text, while a second hand supplied the name of the minister. In this example, the sponsors were not recorded. Even with a good number of documents which bear only the script of the artist himself, it is obvious from the spacing that the artist had executed the *taufscheine* earlier, leaving blank spaces for the appropriate names and other information.

When the small loan exhibit of 1972 was brought together, it was not known whether the artist had actually worked in North Carolina or had simply sent his work there

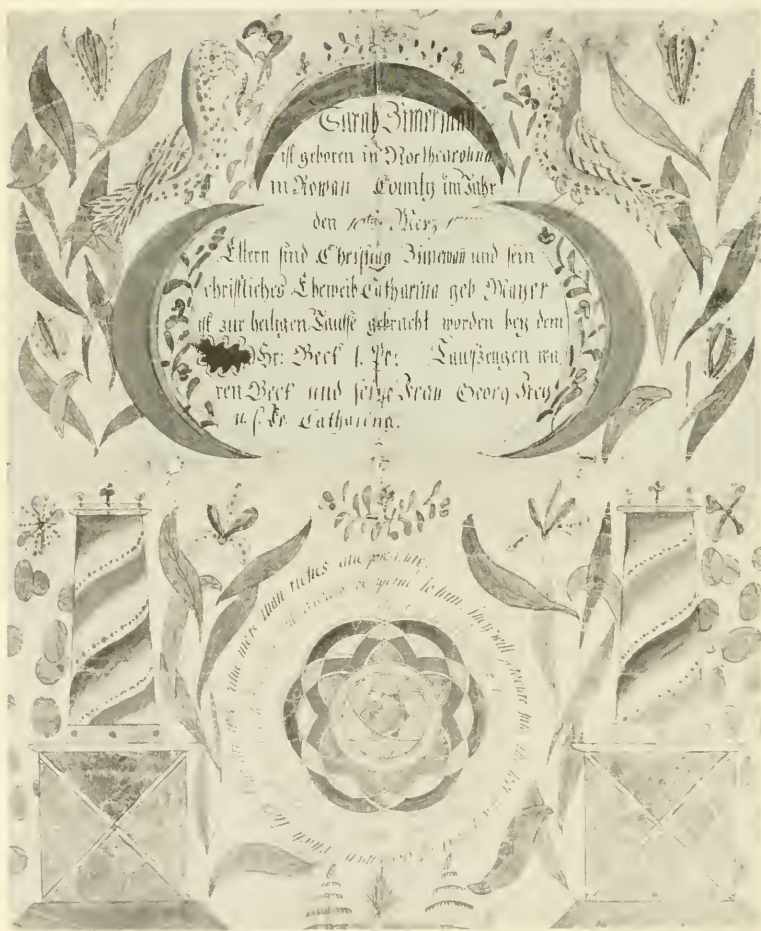


Figure 4. Taufschein of Sarah Zimmerman, born in Friedland, N. C. in 1777. Old Salem, Inc.

upon request from Pennsylvania. Ordering such work from distant artists was not unknown by the early nineteenth century. Two *taufscheine* by Peter Bernhart, an artist working in Rockingham County, Virginia, were found in Rowan County, North Carolina, in recent years. Both were done for members of the Stirewalt family, then residents of Rowan. In another recorded instance, a woman in Bernhart's own town mailed two of his *taufscheine* to a son in Ohio (Klaus Wust, *Virginia Fraktur: Pennmanship as Folk Art* [Edinburg, Virginia: Shenandoah History], 1972), lending credence to the possibility that the *Ehre Vater* artist had carried on a somewhat similar business with North Carolina. In fact, of the seven Carolina *taufscheine* illustrated here, six bear the names of the children of settlers in the Moravian "satellite" communities of Friedberg and Friedland, both a short distance to the south of Salem. The seventh, the *taufschein* of Anna Maria Grabs, was done at the request of a Bethania family. Bethania, another Moravian settlement of larger size, is northwest of Friedland and Friedberg. The close genealogical relationship between the Friedland-Friedberg documents suggests that the work of this artist was well-known in southern Wachovia, and it would not have been unusual for such a group of families to have corresponded with a Pennsylvania artist. Recently, however, proof of the artist's having actually worked in North Carolina was established by a watermarked fraktur, the *taufschein* of Gottlieb Spach (Fig. 2). The watermark, a capital letter "S", (Fig. 11) was that of Gottlieb Schober (1756-1838), a prominent Salem merchant, attorney, and paper manufacturer.

Schober's mill was constructed just west of Salem in 1791 and operated successfully until near the end of the nineteenth century. The mill produced remarkably fine writing paper during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, much of it a matte finish rather than the more common laid paper produced in this country. Schober's full sheet size of writing paper appears to have been close to 16" x 26", with the "S" watermark on the left side of the sheet and "NC" watermarked on the right side. This sheet size could be cut into two sheets measuring 13" x 16", the standard *taufschein* dimension of the period. Another document by an associated artist, the *taufschein* of Christian Spach (Fig. 13), also bears the "S" watermark. The remaining six North Carolina fraktur attributed to the *Ehre Vater* artist have not

yielded such marks. Several are on a paper that is visually identical to the matte paper used on the Gottlieb Spach document, and are very likely further examples of Schober paper. Although the writer has not been able to examine Pennsylvania pieces by this artist for watermarked paper, it is unlikely that any great quantity of Salem-made paper was used in the north in view of the excellent mills in operation there. Paper from both Pennsylvania and England was used in Salem, even after Schober's mill was in full operation. The laid paper used for the *taufschein* in Fig. 5 was such an import.

Just as the identity of the *Ehre Vater* artist has eluded us, it is difficult to determine just when he worked in the Wachovia area, and if he made more than one trip there. The birth dates recorded on the *taufscheine* are little help, since most of the North Carolina examples were drawn well after the birth of the child. Three birth dates are before 1790, three date in the 1790's, and the latest date is 1807. Many of the Pennsylvania documents by the same artist bear dates in the 1790's; since the bulk of the artist's work is done in the vertical format of the late eighteenth century, it would seem likely that the artist may have begun work in the 1780's and worked until just past 1810. The writer suspects that the artist was resident in North Carolina only for a brief period during the first decade of the nineteenth century, possibly serving as a schoolmaster in a Lutheran or Reformed parochial school, as Pastor Weiser has suggested (Frederick S. Weiser, letter to author, 25 August 1973). If so, the school may have been south of the Wachovia tract in Rowan County, an area with a relatively large German population. The future discovery of other *taufscheine* by the artist from that region may serve to pinpoint his locale while in North Carolina. It seems unlikely now that we should expect to find a signed example.

Artistically, the *Ehre Vater* artist should be considered one of the foremost American fraktur artists. He was prolific, and his work demonstrates exceptional design capability, often three-dimensional, an attribute not common in American fraktur. His work shows considerable complexity and variation, the sure mark of a restless hand striving to improve with each execution. His fraktur hand was above average in quality, and his English "copperplate" hand even better.

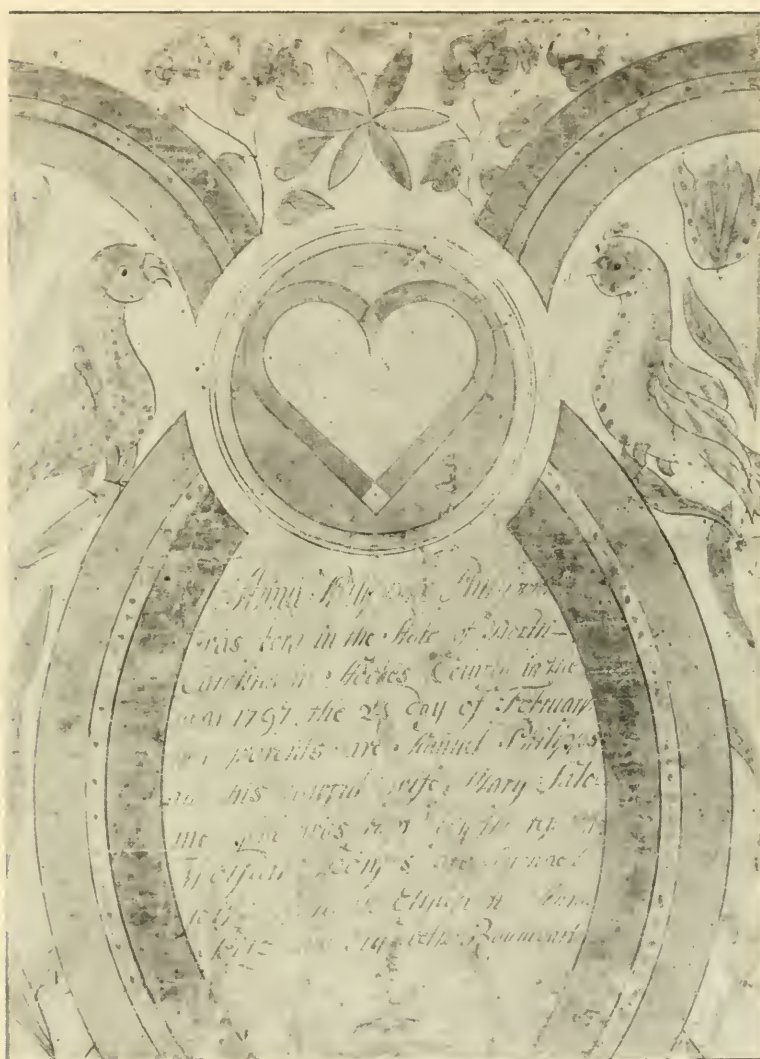
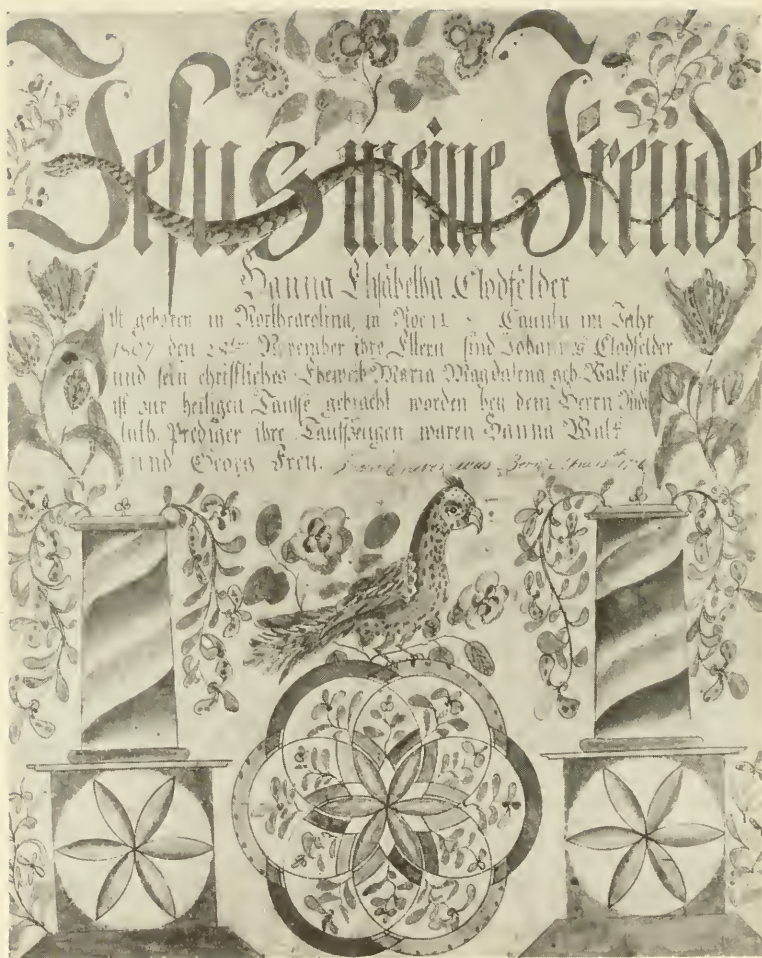
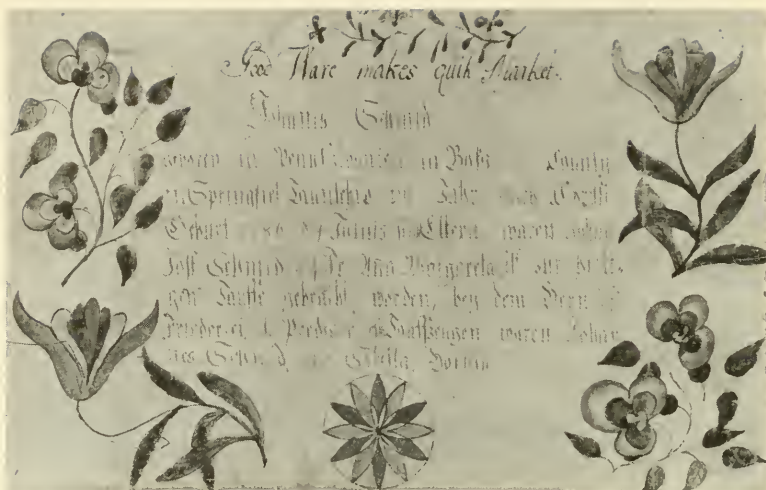


Figure 5. Taufschein of Anna Phillipina Phillips, born in Friedland, N. C. in 1797. Private collection.



Photograph courtesy of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection.

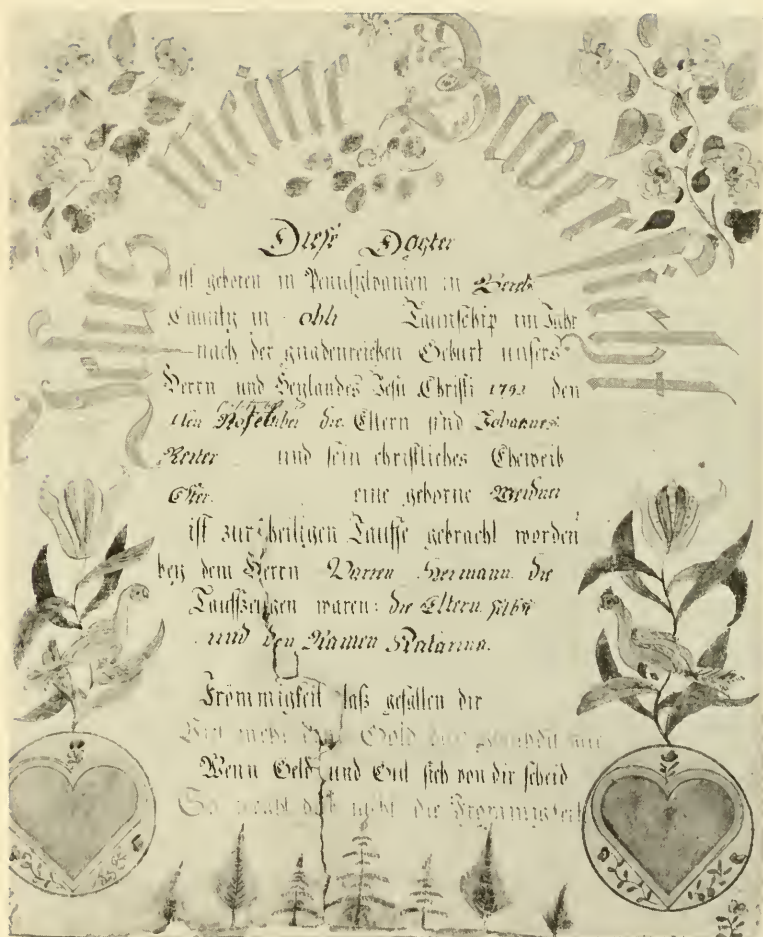
Figure 6. Taufschein of Hanna Elisabeth Clodfelder, born in Friedberg, N. C. in 1807. The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection, Williamsburg, Virginia.



Photograph courtesy of the Free Library of Philadelphia.

Figure 8. Taufschein of Johannes Schmid, born in Springfield Township, Bucks County, Pa. in 1786. The Free Library of Philadelphia.

As with most artists who are represented by a large sample of work, we may easily set forth a "catalogue" of techniques and motifs employed by the artist which may be considered "signatures" of identification. Already discussed have been the artist's general use of a vertical format rather than horizontal (an exception may be seen in Fig. 8, possibly one of the artist's earlier productions), and the use of bold legends or mottos at the head. *Ehre Vater und Mutter* is by far the most common of these, but others such as *Jesus meine Freude* (Jesus my Joy), and *Jesus meine Zuversicht* (Jesus my confidence) may be seen. The artist occasionally presented the subject's name in legend form, as in the Grabs fraktur in Fig. 1. He rarely used secular phrases at the head as in the "Good Ware makes quik Market" in Fig. 8. This particular example may well indicate the trade followed by the



Photograph courtesy of the Free Library of Philadelphia.

Figure 9. Taufschein of an unidentified daughter of Johannes Reiter, born in Oley Township, Bucks County, Pa. in 1792. The Free Library of Philadelphia.

subject's father, since there was a family of potters by the name of Smith (German *Schmid*) in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, during the period.

While most of the lettering on each *taufschein* is in the fraktur hand, the artist frequently used German script for religious verse. Less frequently, "copperplate" script was employed for a message in English, usually a secular one, such as the circular phrase used at the bottom of the Zimmerman fraktur (Fig. 4):

It is a commendable thing for a boy to apply his
mind to the study of good letters, they will always
be useful to him; they will procure him the love
and favour of good men, which those that are wise
value more than riches and pleasure.

It would certainly not be unlike a schoolmaster to introduce such a pedantic message to a *taufschein*, though in this instance it is a bit amusing since the subject of the document happened to be a girl.

Several rather significant and unusual artistic motifs used in this series set the work of the *Ehre Vater* artist apart from other fraktur artists. A principal "signature" of the artist is pointed, elongated and overlapping leaves sprouting from thin "vines," often used as a border to the central block of a text. The leaves are usually veined, and executed in as many as three different shades of green watercolor to provide three-dimensional quality, a highly unusual technique as noted previously. The artist also used other leaf forms, a smaller round one, and a small lobed leaf frequently used to illuminate the letters of the legend (Fig. 3). This technique was occasionally used by the artist to a fussy degree, giving the document a distinctly European flavor.

Another prominent "signature" of the artist's work is the distinctive tulip, often executed in surprisingly realistic markings and colors, unlike many fraktur tulips. Those of the *Ehre Vater* artist are particularly identifiable by their invariably lobed central petals. The outer two petals, usually well "opened," are generally, though not always, pointed at the tips. These stylized flowers do not resemble those of any other fraktur artist whose work the writer has been able to examine.

Another bloom favored by the *Ehre Vater* artist was a pansy-like flower, usually with three petals (Fig. 8), but also

with four or five petals (Fig. 6), picked out in fanciful, unnaturalistic colors. The floral vocabulary of the artist frequently included a sparse forest of cedars and firs, invariably gracing the bottom of the sheet (Fig. 2). This motif is not unusual in view of the Germanic fondness for ordered rows of evergreens; the Moravians used cedars extensively for bordering lanes and in gardens and cemeteries.

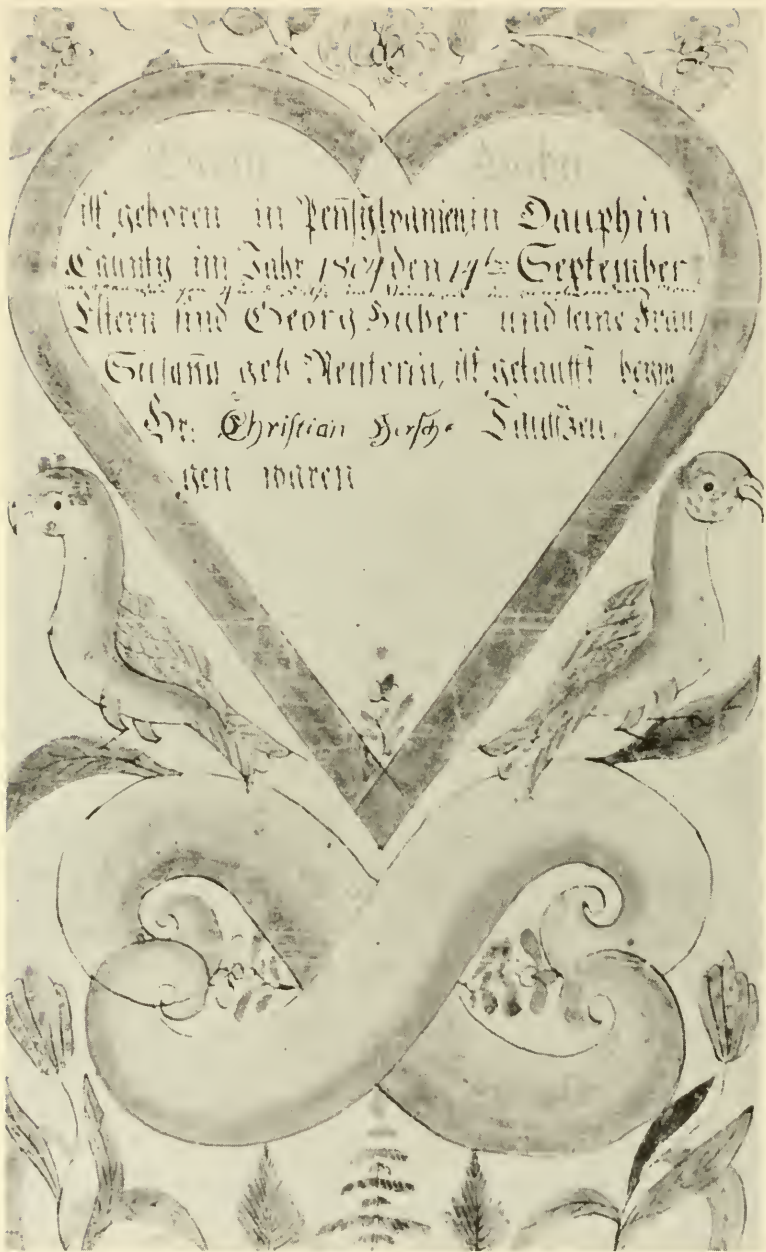
Geometric devices were popular among many fraktur artists, and the work of this man is no exception, though his use of them is so precise that the lines seem that of a draftsman. These compass-constructed details include: entwined circles, often filled with four to six colors (Figs. 4 and 6); compass "roses" (Figs. 2, 6, 7); prominent lunettes (Figs. 2, 4, 5); circles filled with compass-drawn hearts (Figs. 2, 3, 5, 7, 9); and, rarely, truncated or lunetted panelling for the message block. The *Ehre Vater* artist, in fact, used drafting tools for a surprising amount of his work. One quasi-architectural device which he employed frequently (seen on seven of the twenty examples studied) was a ruled-line column standing upon a massive plinth (Figs. 4, 6), often decorated with spirals or annular banding, and invariably sprouting three small blooms at the capital.

Another device frequently encountered on American fraktur and on European documents is *schmorkelwerke*, or calligraphic flourishes, which may be seen below the motto of the Reiter *taufschein* in Fig. 9. This type of device, however, is rarely seen in the work of this artist.

Also prominent on American fraktur is the parrot, generally considered to be the Carolina parakeet. The *Ehre Vater* artist made wide use of these birds, invariably in pairs representing both male and female, and decorated in extraordinary plumage. Though somewhat cartoon-like in appearance, the three-dimensional quality of these birds suggests, like the overlapping leaves, a sure contact on the part of the artist with nature. Very little of this artist's work has the flatness usually encountered in fraktur.

A rarer and more unusual motif used by the artist are pairs of huge Flemish scrolls as seen on the Huber *taufschein* (Fig. 10) and on the exceptionally fine *taufschein* of Eva Margareth Len, which has four such scrolls flanking the text.

The artist was not without humor. On the crossbar of some of his capitals, particularly "F", a tiny kite-shaped face



Photograph courtesy of the Free Library of Philadelphia.

Figure 10. Taufschein of Georg Huber, born in Dauphin County, Pa. in 1804. This document is the so-called "half-size" taufschein, or 8" x 13", rare in the work of the Ehre Vater artist. The Free Library of Philadelphia.

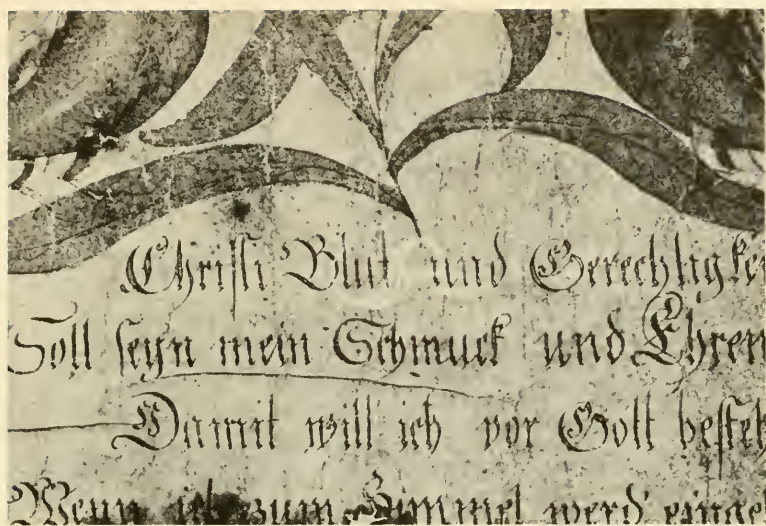


Figure 11. Detail of the *taufschein* of Gottlieb Spach (Fig. 2), showing the watermark of Gottlieb Schober, Salem paper mill owner. The paper was backlit to accent the mark.

may be seen peering out with a grin. One of these imps may be seen in the *taufschein* of Hanna Elisabetha Clodfelter (Fig. 6). In the same document, one might wonder why a snake with a sly look on its face has entwined itself in the motto, when the reptile really has nothing to do with the message.

The *Ehre Vater* artist, from the examples studied, appears to have virtually developed his full artistic vocabulary at the start. Though some documents are executed with greater skill and precision than others, there is little indication in his work of stylistic development; the same motifs occur in degrees from beginning to end.

Two other North Carolina *taufscheine*, also from the Moravian community, are stylistically related to the work of the *Ehre Vater* artist. Both show considerable deviation from the designs which might be considered standard in the work we have just examined. The *taufschein* of Elisabeth Spach (Fig. 12) employs the cartouche-like heart enclosed by a circle and surrounded with the same religious phrase used by the *Ehre Vater* artist on several examples seen, such as

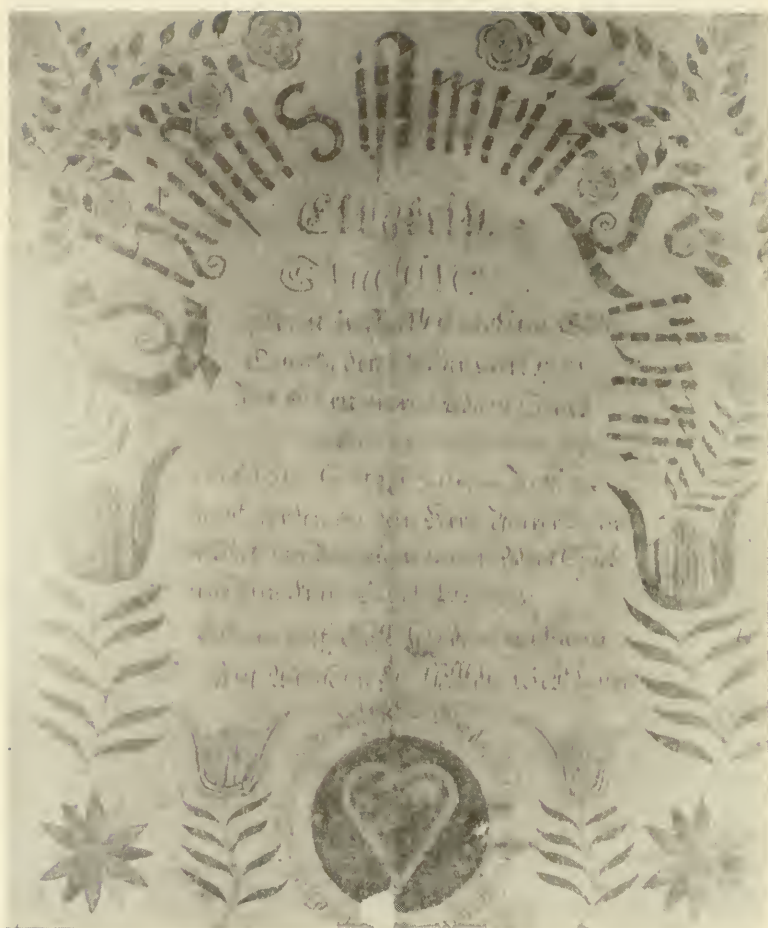


Figure 12. Taufschein of Elisabeth Spach, born near Friedberg, N. C. in 1781. This document is the work of an anonymous artist who either studied under or was influenced by the work of the Ehre Vater artist. Private collection.

the certificate of Johannes Hein (Fig. 7). In addition to a prominent motto at the head ("Christ is my Life"), both the leaves and tulips used on this document (Fig. 12) bear a close resemblance to those of the *Ehre Vater* artist, but lack the tonal range and depth. The *taufschein* of Christian Spach (Fig. 13) exhibits three-petalled "pansies" and veined, elongated leaves similar to those of the *Ehre Vater* artist, though in this instance arranged in swags with ribbons which give a distinct federal style to the piece. Another similarity is the illumination of the capitals with flora, but the veining of the tulips and roses is more similar to the simple floral sketches found in "autograph" books frequently kept by Salem girls in the early nineteenth century. The writer suspects that this particular document was executed by a female artist.



Figure 13. *Taufschein* of Christian Spach, born near Friedberg, N. C. in 1806. This work shows influence from the *Ehre Vater* artist, though not necessarily the work of a student. Private collection.

It is the only *taufschein* known which records a baptism in Salem rather than one in the outlying Moravian towns. Whether or not this *taufschein*, or that of Elisabeth Spach, indicates that the *Ehre Vater* artist took pupils from the Wachovia settlement is a matter for conjecture, but it seems doubtful.

Since *fraktur* was not an art much practiced by the Moravian brethren, the work of the *Ehre Vater* artist, which seemingly occurred on the periphery of the Wachovia settlement, cannot be claimed as a Moravian decorative art. Why this artist made at least one trip to North Carolina, and who he was . . . minister, schoolmaster, cartographer, or whatever . . . will hopefully be discovered eventually. His complex and colorful work deserves favorable comparison with the best of German-American artists in the early nineteenth century.

The author is indebted to the following persons for their kind assistance: Pastor Frederick S. Weiser, Hanover, Pennsylvania; Bradford Lee Rauschenberg, Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, for numerous photographs; Miss Beatrix Rumford, the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection; Donald Walters, the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection; Dr. George Waynick, Winston-Salem, North Carolina; Mr. and Mrs. Harold Vogler, Winston-Salem, North Carolina; Howell Heany, the Free Library of Philadelphia; Mrs. Wallace Schorr, Wilmington, North Carolina; Mrs. W. N. Dalton, Winston-Salem, North Carolina; Mrs. Karol A. Schmiegel, the Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum; Mrs. Z. Taylor Bynum, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

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G:Burwell/Edw^d Atthaws/1755
London Stone Bottles in Virginia

BRADFORD L. RAUSCHENBERG

Between June, 1970, and March, 1972, when Carter's Grove plantation was being excavated by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, sherds of two brown salt-glazed stone-ware bottles of English manufacture were uncovered. Both had applied tags lettered "G:Burwell/Edw^d Atthaws/1755" in relief. In 1973 the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts field research program located an intact bottle with an identical tag that had descended in the Burwell family. Though the bottle represents a common utilitarian form in eighteenth-century England, no other sherds or bottles of this type have been found in America.

Carter's Grove (Fig. 1), located in James City County, Virginia, stands six miles east of Williamsburg. It was constructed during the period 1751 to 1755¹ by Carter Burwell (1716-1756), grandson of Robert "King" Carter (1663-1732) of Corotoman. The plantation came to Carter Burwell after his mother's death. She was Elizabeth Carter (1688-1734), who, in 1709, married Nathaniel Burwell (1680-1721) of Fairfield.² The grandfather had specified in his will that the plantation "in all times to come should be called and go by the name of Carter's Grove."³

Carter Burwell married Lucy Grymes (1718-1766) of Brandon, in nearby Middlesex County, in January, 1738. Building activity at his plantation was started by 1739, with unknown structures requiring some 94,000 bricks that year.⁴



Figure 1. Location of Carter's Grove as noted on the 1775 Fry and Jefferson "A Map of the most Inhabited part of Virginia. . . ." (Arrow indicates Carter Grove.)

In 1751 we know that bricklayers were advertised for and in the same year a copy of William Salmon's *Palladio Londinensis, or, the London Art of Building* was in Burwell's hands.⁵ A new account, "THE BUILDING," was opened in the Burwell accounts with an entry on June 14 of that year, and continued into 1755. By November, 1755, the great house at Carter's Grove was completed.⁶

The death of Carter Burwell just six months later left the affairs of the estate under the administration of William Nelson, merchant of Yorktown, who continued in this capacity



Figure 2. Burwell bottle, 1755. Height 8¾ inches.

until April 15, 1771, when Nathaniel Burwell, the oldest son, became of age.

During the ownership of Carter's Grove by Carter Burwell the London agent or factor who handled the plantation's affairs in England was Edward Athawes. This arrangement was the result undoubtedly of long family experience. From 1734 to 1742 John, Charles and Landon Carter, uncles of Robert Carter of Nomini, also used Athawes, and he is known to have represented other Virginia families.⁷ Edward Athawes was succeeded by his son, Samuel, about 1769, who continued the business at least until 1772. The relationship between the Athawes and the Carters, the Burwells and William Nelson was one of deep friendship as well as business. As usual in Virginia plantation economy, Athawes converted their tobacco into credit, and this into goods to satisfy their rich tastes and everyday necessities.



Figure 3. Astragal molded inscription on Burwell bottle.

Of interest in this respect is a shipment in January, 1734, from Athawes to John and Landon Carter for the "Estate of Robert Carter Esq. of Nominy . . .," listing twenty cases of merchandise. Six were of a large quantity of pale beer and Canary, red port, and Rhenish wine totaling sixty gallons in 214 bottles. We assume these bottles to be glass, as "Stone jugs" are specified on the same invoice among the bottles.⁸ Normally shipments of spirits arrived in America in either barrels or glass bottles. An exception would be the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century Rhenish stoneware jugs of the "Bellarmine" type.

This brings us to the stoneware bottle with the inscription, "G:Burwell/Edw^d Atthaws/1755" (Figs. 2 and 3), and the identical sherds found at Carter's Grove (Fig. 4). Based on archaeological evidence, the fragments found in the kitchen



Photograph courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Figure 4. Fragments excavated at Carter's Grove. Courtesy Ivor Noël Hume, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

yard at Carter's Grove date in the 1770's.⁹ A letter dated September 1, 1772, from William Nelson to Samuel Athawes stated that Mrs. Nelson had received "the stone bottles of porter which, when emptied, shall be sent to Martin's Hundred [Carter's Grove] as you desire." Ivor Noël Hume logically asks the question: why should Athawes ask that Mrs. Nelson send the bottles to Carter's Grove? He suggests, and I agree, that the "1755" bottles were left in Athawes' hands with the death and subsequent estate settlement of Carter Burwell's affairs. Years later Samuel Athawes made use of the empty bottles, then cluttering his cellar, to send porter to Mrs. Nelson, but reminded her that the bottles were Carter's Grove property.¹⁰

Other theories can be advanced, of course, and one cries out for more study of glass bottle dates and their meaning. Were the dates so frequently found on bottles the date of their manufacture, the date of the contents, or a memorial date significant to the owner of the bottle?¹¹ In this memorial sense, did Athawes intend to send some special porter or wine to Carter Burwell as a gift, but never sent it due to his patron's death? Athawes' name on the bottle adds weight to this theory.

Athawes' name on the bottle is also interesting from the viewpoint of how it is written and spelled. He always signed his name "Edw^d:", and the potter here was quite accurate, but "Athawes" turns out to be "Atthaws" on the bottle. The potter also made the "C" initial (for Carter) into a "G." We must attribute these as examples of ceramic spelling errors.¹² There was not a "G" in the Burwell family until 1799.¹³

Where were the bottles made? As mentioned earlier, this type of stoneware bottle is rare on American archaeological sites. One questions its shipment to America in any meaningful quantities,¹⁴ as well as its common use in England. Known examples of this form are few even in English collections. Earlier bottles of the "Bellarmine" type are common, both of the Rhine and rarer Dwight or Fulham varieties. Stylistic evolution would indicate that this handleless bottle vestigially represents the Bellarmine stoneware or the delft sack-type bottles of earlier London manufacture. Glass bottles were rapidly replacing earthenware containers in more sophisticated societies.

During the preparation of this article five other bottles of this type were located. Through comparisons and negative archaeological evidence one can attribute Lambeth as the manufacturing center. Though Fulham and Lambeth are known to have produced brown saltglazed stoneware, Fulham has to be tentatively ruled out; recent archaeology at the factory site has thus far failed to produce any eighteenth-century decorated stoneware,¹⁵ and documented Fulham examples of the eighteenth century are unknown.

Two bottles of this type are inscribed "Geo. Price,"¹⁶ another "John Price"¹⁷ (Fig. 6). Impressed examples include one marked "JMS:NASH/WOODS:CLOSE/CHENEY:ALE/MAN"¹⁸ and the other "W. NASH-/WOODS:CLOSE/CHENEY/ALE/MAN" (Fig. 5). Of these, the last two are of particular interest. A factory origin can perhaps be conjectured by the astragal molded edge to the applied pad. Other forms with this feature were excavated by F. H. Garner at the Doulton site at Lambeth in 1936.¹⁹ Sherds were found which parallel two mugs with astragal molded pads. One has a boar and another a double-headed phoenix.²⁰ These two mugs also relate to the Price bottles in that incised script is present on all three. Also from the Doulton site are two tankard fragments each with a lamb on an astragal molded pad.²¹

While this astragal molded pad group is interesting with its Lambeth attribution, it emphasizes the lack of study of London brown saltglazed stoneware. Undoubtedly other potteries in London were producing this ware besides Lambeth, but until new evidence arises one can only regard the Burwell bottles as a product of Lambeth.

In conclusion, this bottle represents the only known extant specimen made specifically for the American market. It has passed down in the same family to the present day. Of this astragal molded pad group it is the only dated example.

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Figure 5. English brown stoneware bottle impressed "W. NASH / WOODS:CLOSE / CHENEY:ALE / MAN," courtesy Guildhall Museum, London. Photograph courtesy Ivor Noël Hume. Currently on loan to Cuming Museum, Southwark.



Figure 6. English brown stoneware bottle inscribed "John Price," height 8½ inches. Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.

NOTES

1. Stephenson, Mary A., *Carter's Grove Plantation* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, 1964), p. 43.
2. Noël Hume, Ivor, *Digging for Carter's Grove* (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1974), p. 13.
3. Stephenson, *Carter's Grove*, pp. 27, 34.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 31. In 1744 bricks were made on the plantation and 460,000 bricks were bought in 1750.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 38. *The Virginia Gazette* Office charged Carter Burwell for a copy of *Palladio Londinensis* in December, 1751. This publication, rare in American bookseller advertisements, was first published in London in 1734 (2nd ed. 1743; 3rd, 1748; 4th, 1752; and 5th, 1755). Helen Park, "A List of Architectural Books Available in America before the Revolution," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. XX, No. 3, p. 128. Architectural historians relate Carter's Grove to this work, especially in the woodwork of the west parlor and hall.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
7. Morton, Louis, *Robert Carter of Nomini Hall* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., 1945), pp. 33, 122.
8. Edward Athawes to John & Landon Carter, "Invoice of Goods Laden on Board the Charles . . .", London, January 29, 1734, Virginia Historical Society, MSS1/c2468/a.
9. Noël Hume, *Digging for Carter's Grove*, p. 51.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
11. Noël Hume, Ivor, "The Glass Wine Bottle In Colonial Virginia," *Journal of Glass Studies*, (Corning: The Corning Museum of Glass, 1961), Vol. III, p. 98.
12. Rauschenberg, Bradford Lee, "Discovery: A Documented Bow Bowl Made for Hallifax Lodge/North Carolina," *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, (High Point: Hall Printing Co., 1975), pp. 8-9.
13. Stephenson, *Carter's Grove*, p. 484. This was George Harrison Burwell (1799-1873).
14. *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, ed. Philip M. Hanes. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), Vol. III, p. 483. An advertisement quoted in this source from the Charleston *South-Carolina Gazette*, mentions an unclaimed shipment of "Three Casks, one marked IT No. 6, the other two obscurely marked, and a few Stone bottles, . . ."
15. Christophers, V. R., "A Brief Account of the Excavations," excerpt from unknown publication, 1974, courtesy Miss M. M. Delhom, Mint Museum, Charlotte, N. C., p. 10.

16. Drinkwater, John, "Some Notes on English Salt-glaze Brown Stoneware," *Transactions of the English Ceramic Circle*, Vol. 2, No. 6 (London: Lund Humphries & Co., 1939), plate XIV, Fig. C. Another example is in the Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum.
17. This bottle, in the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, and the "Geo. Price" bottle, were found in the Thames River in London.
18. Drinkwater, *Some Notes*, Fig. A.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 33. See also Garner, F. H., "Lambeth Earthenware," *Transactions of the English Ceramic Circle* (London: Lund Humphries & Co., 1937), Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 50.
20. Drinkwater, *Some Notes*, plate XIII, Figs. A, C.
21. Letter, Robert J. Charleston, Keeper, Department of Ceramics, Victoria and Albert Museum, to author, August 29, 1975.

Thomas Coram: Charleston Artist*

WHALEY BATSON

Thomas Coram, merchant, engraver, artist and humanitarian, came to Charleston, South Carolina from Bristol, England. The date of his arrival is given by Coram in his will as March 1, 1769, "being 7 years before the declaration of American Independence."¹ His father, John Coram, and older brother, also named John, had immigrated earlier to Charleston where the father soon became a merchant in the city.² Both sons later established mercantile businesses independently of each other.

In an advertisement appearing in the *South Carolina and American Gazette* for 1778 Thomas Coram informed his friends that a fire at his shop had forced him to relocate his business.³ A subsequent advertisement listed reduced inventory and another location change — to the store formerly occupied by his brother, John.⁴ The brother had advertised in May that he was selling his household goods and moving to the West Indies. He had elected not to sign the oath of allegiance to the Commonwealth and consequently had to leave the colony within a specified time.⁵

Thomas Coram, the artist, remained in the colonies and served in the Continental army. An editorial published about

*The author is particularly indebted to Margaret Simons Middleton's article ("Thomas Coram, Engraver and Painter," *ANTIQUES*, June 1936, pp. 242-244) and Ashmead F. Pringle's article ("Thomas Coram's Bible," *ANTIQUES*, November 1936, pp. 226-227) for much of the general biographical information on the artist and the Coram family as discussed in this essay.

Coram the day of his funeral adequately described his allegiance to the American cause: "Sincerely attached to the interests of our country, and the principles of its revolution, he volunteered in this support, and served with fidelity, although in the humble station of a private soldier."⁶ It is believed that Coram's military duty was at an end by the time of the 1778 fire at his shop.

It was also in 1778 that Coram advertised his new occupation and interest — engraving. He was a self-taught engraver by his own admission, "using every effort to his abilities (as he was never brought up to it) to give them satisfaction."⁷ Subsequent advertisements mention cyphers, cards and shop bills for merchants, visiting and compliment cards, and engraved regimental and fancy buttons. By 1781 his newspaper notices read "Thomas Coram, engraver" and his residence was listed as No. 28, Queen Street. The number of this house was later changed to No. 70 by order of the City Council.⁸ It was here that Coram and his wife, Ann, made their home until their deaths.

Several times during the 1780's Coram advertised a three-part engraving of the Battle of Fort Moultrie, but no examples of this work have been found.⁹ A painting of this subject, probably the source for the engraving, did exist, as it is recorded in the Minutes of the German Friendly Society for March 5, 1817. The Minutes cite a letter from Dr. Philip Tidyman requesting acceptance of the picture: "This painting was executed by our worthy and lamented fellow Citizen, Mr. Coram, whose situation as a spectator of the battle enabled him to do justice to a subject, . . ." A further reference of July 2, 1817, in the Minutes creates a committee to decide on the placement of the painting in "some suitable part of the Hall. . . ."¹⁰

Thomas Coram's success as an engraver is further documented by his appointment to engrave bills for the State of South Carolina in 1799. Surviving examples of his work in Charleston include a seal for the Charleston Library Society and a cypher interestingly engraved with Coram's name.¹¹

Coram was listed in the City Directories of Charleston as an engraver from 1782 to 1802, when he is listed as painter and engraver; in 1803 as a limner; and in 1806 as painter and engraver. Even before the 1802 listing appeared, painting had its fascination for Coram. In his advertisement

following the fire of 1778, he asked the return of a borrowed volume of a Dictionary of Arts and Sciences with cuts. If this volume was similar to the American version published in 1798, Coram may have found it useful in learning drawing techniques.¹² The July 2, 1778, advertisement also states that he executed coats of arms in a "masterly manner using either oils or water colours."

Coram certainly had the opportunity of viewing a number of good paintings and engravings owned by Charleston families. Peter Manigault's portrait was executed in 1751 by the English artist, Alan Ramsay, and the painting was sent to his mother in Charleston.¹³ The portrait of Arthur Middleton, his wife and infant son was painted by Benjamin West in London and by 1771 Middleton had returned to Charleston with the painting.¹⁴ Appearing in the Charleston papers, particularly after 1790, were many advertisements concerning sales of paintings, engravings and French, English and Italian prints.¹⁵ One sale advertised "a number of *Oil Paintings* by the first masters in Europe."¹⁶ A rather extensive exhibition was held in Charleston in 1801 featuring engravings of all of Hogarth's works as well as a choice collection of scriptural and fancy work.¹⁷

Other portraits by artists who had worked or were working in Charleston included examples by Henrietta Johnston, Jeremiah Theüs, John Wollaston, John Trumbull, James Earl, Rembrandt Peale, Edward Malbone and the South Carolina natives, Washington Allston and Charles Fraser. Examples by these artists may have inspired the amateur limner, but from the Charleston-born painter, Charles Fraser, we learn that Coram's instruction was chiefly derived from Henry Benbridge.¹⁸ After studying in Italy and working briefly with Benjamin West in London, Benbridge arrived in Charleston in 1772. After Theüs' death in 1774 and until 1790 Benbridge was the only major artist working in Charleston. It seems logical that Coram sought him out for conversation as well as instruction.

Coram's gleanings of information from books and his contacts with other well known artists in the Charleston area must have made him aware of the paintings of great English masters. It is possible that he owned or had access to Joshua Reynolds' *Discourses on Art*, which were published both separately and in collected editions between 1769 and

1797. Coram seemed to thrive on self-study and his contemporaries were quick to praise his enthusiasm and efforts in the arts. Dr. David Ramsay, South Carolina historian, wrote: "Thomas Coram by an innate love of the art and great industry, has far exceeded what could have been expected from his slender opportunities for improvement."¹⁹ Ramsay and his wife apparently were personal friends of the Corams, attending the funeral of "our dear respected Mr. Coram."²⁰ Ann Coram's will was witnessed by a Dr. J. Ramsay and M. H. L. Ramsay who may have been Mrs. Martha Laurens Ramsay, wife of Dr. David Ramsay.²¹

Charles Fraser was also a contemporary of Coram and evidently knew him and his work. William Dunlap, in his *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, prefaces his artistic evaluation of Coram by noting that the information was furnished by Fraser.²² Because of the wording of Fraser's information to Dunlap, including minor inaccuracies, it is believed that Fraser was the author of the editorial in the *Times* on the day of Coram's funeral.

The *Times* editorial gives, perhaps, the most complete picture of Coram's artistic ability and personality: "Fond of study and retirement, and encouraged by success, he entirely devoted himself to the pursuit of these, and finally made them his chief occupation. By combining methods with industry, he produced an incredible number of works; for there was scarce a department in painting which he did not attempt." The author goes on to say that "Painting was the favorite theme of his conversation . . . [which] was always agreeable and instructive to the lovers of art."²³

At his death in 1811 Coram left to his wife all of his paintings, drawings, prints and implements for drawing to be disposed of if she wished. In turn, Ann Coram specified in her will of 1825 that the same be sold and the money be equally divided between the Sunday Schools of St. Philip's and the Baptist Church for the religious education of the young. Coram's library of books and the case in which they were contained were bequeathed to the Charleston Orphanage either to be used for instruction or to be sold as the Commissioners saw fit.²⁴ Coram and his wife were childless, and the Orphanage was of particular interest to them.

Coram's involvement with the Orphanage serves to introduce another aspect of the man's personality — that of

humanitarian. In 1739 Captain Thomas Coram of London realized his dream of establishing a Foundling Hospital for the unwanted children of London. This Thomas Coram and the Charleston artist were related or, as stated in the *Times* editorial, "nearly related." Their kinship was probably an uncle-nephew one. Parallels between these men are interesting, as Captain Coram of London was also childless, a humanitarian, and through his lifetime secured paintings for the Foundling Hospital by major London artists including Hogarth, Gainsborough, Reynolds and others.²⁵ Perhaps the good works of Captain Coram impressed the young artist who came to Charleston and may have been the captain's namesake.

Thomas and Ann Coram were generous to the Charleston Orphanage. In addition to the gift of Coram's library, the artist's will lists a joint bequest from him and his wife of their house to the Commissioners of the Orphanage. Coram also left the principal of his stocks to the Orphanage after his wife's lifetime. According to the *Times* editorial, Coram spent the last hours of his life in charitable work with widows and orphans. A good part of the editorial is devoted to this aspect of his life, and the author notes that "his house was truly the abode of faithful friendship and conjugal affection."²⁶

An entry in St. Philip's Register of May 3, 1811, records that Coram received a full service at the cost of five dollars, that he was 54, had been a limner, and died in an "apoplectic Fit."²⁷ From all accounts he lived an exemplary life and was esteemed in his role as an artist in Charleston.

NOTES ON PAINTINGS BY CORAM

MESDA recently acquired Coram's portrait of *Mrs. Thomas Glover* (Fig. 1) which is inscribed on the back, "To Thos. Glover Esq. this humble attempt/to bestowe to his Memory/ this portrait of his beloved/departed Wife/is/presented by his friends/Tho. Coram/1794." The portrait is framed in an oval, gilt over gesso frame of white pine, probably original and signed "Champ. Killy [Kelly, Tilly]." The subject is painted in soft colors of gray-green background and ecru for dress and cap, with brown for her hair which curls over her shoulders. At present this is the only known signed portrait by Coram.

Another portrait owned by MESDA and attributed to Coram is *The Cart Children*, also painted posthumously (Fig.

2). The eyes of the little girl and treatment of her hair compare favorably with Mrs. Glover's features. The figure of the young boy illustrates Benbridge's influence on Coram. The boy's hair and ear are almost identical to the child Margaret in the *Four Generations* portrait executed by Benbridge in 1787 (Fig. 3). Instead of the rich satins and silks seen in the Benbridge, Coram preferred soft, muslin-like white dresses, trimmed with lace at the neck and sleeves and with blue sashes tied at the waist. The Cart children's dresses are alike except for sleeve endings. This costume is found in children's portraits in Charleston and elsewhere in American and English portraiture of the eighteenth century. The tone of Coram's painting brings to mind the *Times* editorial and often quoted phrase from Fraser: ". . . in his [Coram's] oil paintings there was a harmony of colouring and felicity of execution. . . ." The calm, classical tone, the iconography of death expressed in the figure of the boy with hand raised to a sunlit heaven in the upper right corner of the portrait, and the gentle winding river behind the children present a harmonious picture.

There seems to be no direct connection between the John Cart family and the Corams other than that they were both members of St. Philip's Church. Considering the size of the parish at that time, this seems to be sufficient in establishing a relationship between the families. Coram must have known the children and either, as tradition has it, as a gesture of good will, or by commission from the parents, executed the portrait. Recorded in the Register of St. Philip's Church are two burial notices: "June 14, 1800 Christopher Cart";²⁸ and later, "August 23, 1801 Susan. Child of John Cart." "Susan.", written with a period, is obviously an abbreviation of the name Susannah, so named after her mother. These seem to be the children represented in the MESDA painting, for family tradition indicates that they died close together and probably of diphtheria.

There is a curious thick muscle in Christopher Cart's neck, a characteristic which occurs again in Coram's religious painting illustrating the scriptural quotation, "Jesus said suffer little Children to come unto me. . . ." This large, composite painting betrays Benbridge influence in both the coloration and the treatment of fabric (Fig. 4). The prominent neck treatment is seen in the boy holding a child to the right of



Figure 1. MRS. THOMAS GLOVER (dates unknown). Oil on paper glued to wood panel of red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana* or *Juniperus silicicola*). $9\frac{7}{8} \times 7\frac{3}{4}$ inches, actual size. MES-DA ac. no. 2776-1

Christ. The painting was a gift to the Charleston Orphanage from Coram and for many years hung in the chapel there.²⁹

Other paintings documented to Coram include several small landscapes, oil on paper, signed by the artist (Fig. 5). These scenes depict Mulberry Plantation and various views in and around that South Carolina estate. They illustrate that Coram apparently painted from nature as he saw it and paid due observation to the various plant forms and scenery around him. A number of these small paintings are in the collections of the Gibbes Art Gallery, Charleston, South Carolina.

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Figure 2. THE CART CHILDREN (birth dates unknown). Susannah's death believed to be August 23, 1801 and Christopher's death believed to be June 14, 1800. Oil on canvas. 48 x 37¼ inches, actual size. MESDA ac. no. 2672.



Figure 3. THE FOUR GENERATIONS, Henry Benbridge. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Figure 4. "Jesus said suffer little Children." Oil on panel, probably mahogany. $50\frac{3}{4} \times 85$ inches, actual size. The Commissioners of Charleston Orphan House, on permanent deposit with the South Carolina Historical Society.



*Figure 5. BOATS ON THE COOPER RIVER. Oil on paper. $2\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$ inches, actual size.
Carolina Art Association, Charleston, South Carolina.*

NOTES

1. Will of Thomas Coram, March 20, 1811. Recorded in Will Book E-1807-1818, p. 190, Charleston County Court House.
2. *South Carolina Gazette*, 8-15 December 1766.
3. *Ibid.*, 19 March 1766.
4. *Charleston (S.C.) Times*, 3 May 1811.
5. *South Carolina and American Gazette (SC & AG)*, 28 May 1778. In an eleven year period of residency John Coram had become quite successful. A partial listing of his household goods included fine mahogany furniture, linens, silver as well as a pew in the north gallery of St. Philips Church. His father, John, was apparently dead by this time as son John gave notice that he was collecting for the estate of his father.
6. *Times*, 3 May 1811.
7. *SC & AG*, 2 July 1778.
8. The full quote from Coram's will reads: "I do hereby give and devise and bequeath to the use of My sincerely beloved and affectionate Wife Ann Coram, My house and Lot of land in Queen Street, known at present (agreeable to a whimsical order of the City Council) by the number 70, which I Purchased . . . and then known by the N. 28."
9. *SC & AG*, 2 July 1778.
10. *The History of the German Friendly Society of Charleston, South Carolina 1766-1916*, compiled by George J. Gogaware (Richmond: Garrett and Massie), pp. 78-79.
11. The cypher is in the collections of the Carolina Art Association of South Carolina and the seal is owned by the Charleston Library Association.
12. *Encyclopaedia; or, A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences* (plates) (Philadelphia: printed by Thomas Dobson, at the Stone House, No. 41, South Second Street, 1798).
13. Rutledge, Anna Wells, *Artists in the Life of Charleston* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1949), p. 116.
14. *Art in South Carolina 1670-1970*, ed. Francis W. Bilodeau and Mrs. Thomas J. Tobias. (South Carolina: The South Carolina Tricentennial Commission, 1970), p. 51.
15. *Times*, 2 April 1801.
16. *Ibid.*, 26 December 1800.
17. *Ibid.*, 30 July 1801.
18. Dunlap, William, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* (New York: George P. Scott and Co., 1834), vol. 1, pp. 241-242.
19. Ramsay, David, *The History of South Carolina from Its First Settlement in 1670, to the Year 1808* (Charleston: David Longworth, 1809), vol. 2, pp. 269-270.

20. Rutledge, *Artists in Charleston*, p. 124.
21. Will of Ann Coram, June 8, 1825. Recorded in Will Book F-1818-1826, p. 689, Charleston County Court House.
22. Dunlap, *History of the Arts*, vol. 1, pp. 241-242.
23. *Times*, 3 May 1811.
24. Will of Thomas Coram.
25. Nichols, R. H. and F. A. Wray, *The History of the Foundling Hospital* (England: Oxford University Press, 1935), pp. 3, 261-263.
26. *Times*, 3 May 1811.
27. *Register of St. Philip's Church, Charleston, South Carolina, 1810-1822*, ed. Elise Pinckney for the 1973 National Society of Colonial Dames of America in the State of South Carolina.
28. *Register of St. Philip's Church, Charleston, South Carolina, 1754-1810*, ed. D. E. Huger Smith and A. S. Salley, Jr. (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1971).
29. Mills, Robert, *Statistics of South Carolina* (South Carolina: Hurlbut & Lloyd, 1826).

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